



MINEHEAD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S
REPORT FOR 1957**

The Registrar General's figure for the population of the town is 7,450 ; the figure for 1956 being 7,430 and for 1955, 7,440. It is probable that during the summer holidays this figure is more than doubled. The seasonal increase usually commences in June and continues until September. There are also minor variations at Easter and Christmas. The large majority of the hotels, boarding houses and apartments close down for the winter months.

WATER SUPPLY.

As has been pointed out in previous reports, a very extensive catchment area, such as your Minehead undertaking, is inseparable from occasional surface contamination. The appearance of evidence of this in samples of raw water sent for analysis to the Pathological Laboratory proves this to be the case.

In 1956, in view of this, all water was chlorinated before being passed into public use. The accompanying table demonstrates the success of this treatment. The presence of five affected samples was due to a defect in the chlorinator, which was dealt with and has not recurred, subsequent samples being clear.

RAW WATER				TREATED AFTER GOING INTO SUPPLY			
BACTERIOLOGICAL		CHEMICAL		BACTERIOLOGICAL		CHEMICAL	
Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory	Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory	Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory	Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory
18	14	5	—	30	5	—	—

The water is supplied to the public direct from the mains, either direct to the houses or by means of standpipes. It will be seen from the accompanying table the manner of its distribution.

	DIRECT TO THE HOUSES			BY MEANS OF STANDPIPES		
	Public	Water Companies	Private	Public	Water Companies	Private
Number of Dwelling Houses	2,493	—	58	15	—	—
Population	7,145	—	261	44	—	—

The following extensions or improvements of supply were carried out during the year :—

- Renewal of 6in. main in Summerland Road and Glenmore Road.
- Scraping and relining mains in Warren Road and Northfield Road.
- Link-up of Broadwood and Longwood supplies to Staunton Reservoir commenced.
- Link-up between Alcombe and Turnhill Lea commenced.

Complaints are frequently being received as to the discolouration of the water from taps in the houses. It has been explained that this discolouration has been examined and found to consist of suspended matter and rust deposit in the mains. It is quite harmless.

SWIMMING POOLS.

There is one Swimming Pool, situated on the sea front, which is privately owned. This pool is filled with sea water which undergoes chlorination before being admitted to the pool. The filtration and chlorination plant are under skilled management and the engineer is on duty the whole of the time the bath is in operation. Frequent testing indicates that the water carried the necessary amount of residual chlorine to ensure a safe bathing water. Samples submitted from time to time were all found to be satisfactory.

The efficiency of the management of the Swimming Pool and the condition of the bathing water have at no time given rise to any anxiety.

SEWAGE.

In my last report your Council was dealing with this matter and I gather it is still *sub judice*. With regard to that section which deals with beach contamination, it has not yet been shown satisfactorily to what extent this is injurious to health, and in this aspect it is a national rather than a local responsibility. The other aspect, that of the presence of crude sewage amongst the bathers on the beach, cannot be other than a deterrent to the general public from using the beaches for bathing. I have heard so many adverse criticisms of this unpleasant *status in quo* that unless some action is taken to mitigate it, bathing in the open sea and use of the beaches will have to be excluded from the amenities of Minehead.

Practically all the houses in the district are served by water-closet accommodation ; only eight are not so served. Of these seven are pail closets and one chemical.

The public cleansing is done by direct labour. During the season there is a considerable increase in the quantity of litter created by the visitors to the town and sea front. Complaints on this matter have been received from time to time. The allocation of more personnel to this branch of public cleansing should have the desired effect of abating the nuisance. I am assured that constant supervision is being maintained. The controlled tip which is situated beyond Quay West is in good condition and the disinfecting plant is satisfactory.

MEAT AND OTHER FOODS.

Meat is prepared for human food at the Minehead Abattoir, from where it is distributed throughout the districts of Minehead, Watchet and Williton. So far as is practical all animals are inspected before slaughter and all carcases and offal are inspected in accordance with instructions laid down in Memo. 62 Foods, and appropriate action taken where required.

All places where food is prepared, &c., including the Abattoir, shops, stalls and vehicles, are inspected from time to time and action taken as required. Generally the cleanliness of these establishments and vehicles is satisfactory.

A list of premises used in this context in alphabetical order follows :—

Bakehouses ...	...	...	4	Dairy Shops	...	...	3
Bakers' Shops	...	...	4	Fishmongers ...	...	...	4
Butchers	...	...	9	Fried Fish Shops	...	...	2
Cafés	...	...	19	Fruiterers and Greengrocers			8
Chemists	...	...	5	Grocers	...	...	31
Clubs, &c.	...	...	13	Hostels	...	...	1
Canteens	...	...	2	Hotels with Restaurants	...		11
Church Halls	...	...	7	Hotels, Residential	...	...	43
Confectioners	...	...	8	Licensed Premises	...	...	9
Dairies	...	...	1	Pie Factory	...	...	1

The number of inspections given to these premises was 703 during the year.

The care and cleanliness of these premises was found to be satisfactory.

The method of disposal of such food as is condemned is by burning. No large quantities of food were dealt with.

MEAT INSPECTION, 1957

CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED.

Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part during year :—

	Cattle excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number killed (if known) ...	815	155	248	5,295	2,461
Number inspected	815	155	248	5,295	2,461
<i>All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci :</i>					
Whole carcases condemned ...	—	1	—	6	1
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	37	47	2	76	105
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis and cisticerci	4.5	31.0	0.8	1.5	4.6
<i>Tuberculosis only :</i>					
Whole carcase condemned ...	—	1	—	—	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	2	9	—	—	62
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	0.2	6.4	—	—	2.5
<i>Cysticercosis :</i>					
Carcase of which some part or organ was condemned	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration ...	—	—	—	—	—
Generalised and totally condemned	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Weight of meat condemned (in lbs.) for :</i>	ALL ANIMALS				
(a) Tuberculosis	1,978				
(b) Cysticercosis	—				
(c) Other	2,989				
Total (in lbs.) condemned ...	4,967				

MILK.

The milk supply during the year was satisfactorily maintained. Samples taken from time to time that did not come up to the required standard were investigated and the cause ascertained and remedied.

- (a) The total number of Registered Distributors was four.
- (b) The total number of Registered Dairy Premises was one.
- (c) The number of Licenced Dealers of Designated Milk was five.
- (d) The number of supplementary licences issued to Distributors whose dairy is outside this area was nil.

MANUFACTURE OF ICE CREAM.

The regulations governing this manufacture and the requirements implicit in them have tended to restrict the preparation of ice cream to the large wholesale houses. The distributors find it more profitable to purchase their ice cream in bulk.

The number of Premises registered for :—

Manufacture and retail ...	8
Manufacture only ...	—
Retail only ...	45

HOUSING.

The total number of houses is 2,566. During the year 15 houses were erected by private enterprise. There were no houses erected by the Local Authority. Eighteen houses were in course of erection by private enterprise at the close of the year.

The total number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year was approximately 125. There were no cases of overcrowding.

The number of Post War houses erected up to the 31st December, 1957, was :—

By Local Authority ...	226
By private enterprise ...	128

IMPROVEMENT GRANTS MADE UNDER THE HOUSING ACT, 1949-1954.

Number of applications and houses dealt with by the Local Authority :—

	Received		Approved		Rejected	
	Appli- cations	No. of Dwellings	Appli- cations	No. of Dwellings	Appli- cations	No. of Dwellings
31 7.49 } 31.12.56 } During year	8 7	9 7	7 7	7 7	1 —	2 —
Totals ...	15	16	14	14	1	2

FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 and 1948.

Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Public Health Inspector) :—

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	12	16	1	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	58	47	—	—
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises)	—	—	—	—
TOTAL ...	70	63	1	—

Cases in which defects were found :—

	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	
Want of cleanliness ...	1	1	—	—	—
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork) ...	1	—	—	1	—
TOTAL ...	2	1	—	1	—

Number of out-workers in August list required by Section 110(1) (c) Wearing Apparel, 5.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The year 1957 is not distinguished by any serious outbreaks of any of the specific fevers. One case of Poliomyelitis occurred in September, this being a visitor from Bristol.

Sporadic cases of measles and whooping cough occurred during the year, but not in sufficient numbers to justify the use of the word epidemic. Fourteen cases of scarlet fever were notified, but these were all of a mild type. One case of food poisoning was notified, this being a visitor to Minehead.

Cases requiring institutional isolation are sent to Taunton Isolation Hospital.

Disinfection of premises after infectious disease is carried out by the Local Authority, also after cases of an unhygienic or unpleasant nature on receipt of a written request from the General Practitioner in attendance.

TUBERCULOSIS.

There were four cases of tuberculosis notified. There were two deaths.

HOSPITAL.

The Minehead and West Somerset Hospital is entirely administered by the Bridgwater, Minehead, and Butleigh Management Committee.

Local representation in the management of the Hospital exists in the House Committee of the Hospital, on which the town is represented. This Committee is responsible for the day to day supervision of the Institution and is empowered to make recommendations and representations to the Committee of Management. The Committee of Management is represented on the Committee by two of its members.

AMBULANCE SERVICE.

The Transport Service for Minehead and District is carried out by the St. John Ambulance Brigade from the Minehead St. John Ambulance Brigade Headquarters under Station Officer E. S. Lamb. Three ambulances and two sitting case cars are based on the Headquarters. The Station Officer has six full-time ambulance drivers under his supervision. Night work and week-end duties are undertaken with the assistance of the voluntary drivers. The Minehead Nursing Division supplies the Nursing personnel for all journeys in which a nurse is required.

To demonstrate the work performed from the Minehead Headquarters and its personnel, I have appended the following figures :—

Miles travelled	...	...	...	77,193
Journeys performed	...	...	...	2,637
Patients conveyed	...	...	...	7,057

These figures include accidents, emergencies and removals.

CLINICS.

Clinics, with the exception of Infant Welfare, are now held at the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital.

VITAL STATISTICS.

		Total	M.	F.
Live Births—Legitimate	...	63	28	35
Illegitimate	...	4	2	2
Birth Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	...	9.		
		Total	M.	F.
Deaths	...	104	43	61

Death Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population, 13.9.

Death Rate of Infants under one year of age :—29.8.

An analysis of the vital statistics shows that the total deaths registered were 104 ; in 1956 the number was 110.

The total of live births were 67 compared with 81 the previous year.

With regard to the deaths occurring in age groups, 19 occurred between 60 and 70 ; 70 occurred over the age of 70, and of these, 37 occurred between 70 and 80 ; 29 between 80 and 90, and four at 90 or over. It would seem that of the 104 deaths only 34 failed to reach the three score years and ten.

Consideration of the causes of deaths shows that 63 deaths resulted from diseases of the circulatory system; the figure for the previous year being 72. A percentage comparison gives 60 for this year in contrast with 65 the previous year.

Of these 63 deaths, lesions of the coronary vessels of the heart number 17, and vascular lesions of the nervous system 17. There were four deaths due to respiratory disease. The total number of deaths from malignant disease was 21 compared with 18 the previous year.

Glancing back over the summary that I have put before you one is struck by the paucity of matter at which to cavil.

Minehead grows under your direction and its appearance improves in those matters that attract the eye without offending the other special senses. The conservation of open spaces is paying a dividend and their use for bright and colourful gardens, however small, is matter for appreciative comment by all who see them. The lay-out of the town and its freedom from architectural excrescences to offend the eye does not pass unnoticed.

The water supply is abundant and is now free from the risk of surface pollution. This is a possession in your trust for the future of Minehead and in these days, when water supplies are at a premium, must be guarded with vigilance.

With regard to drainage and sewerage, everyone must realise the difficulties facing you; difficulties arising from the shortness of the immediate watershed and its acute gradient on the one hand, and the tide and currents of the Bristol Channel on the other. This problem you have before you and I have already stressed the need for action with regard to beach pollution, not a minor aspect in a seaside resort.

Your Public Health Inspector reports on the excellence of the cleanliness which prevails in all those premises and vehicles dealing with the food of the community.

The absence of overcrowding is a matter for congratulation. Litter nuisance is definitely on the wane except on the beach, where it still wags its ugly head.

The services dealing with sickness and accidents which play such an important part in the morale of Urban and Rural communities are adequate. The Hospital, Ambulance Transport Service, and the District Nursing Service with their happy combination of voluntary and paid personnel provide an excellent ground work for the maintenance of health. The last-mentioned service is, I fear, at times overworked.

The vital statistics dealing with the death rate and the causation of deaths show that the health of the community has been maintained at its usual high level.

Infectious diseases occurred, but at no time achieved proportions justifying the term epidemic.

One case of Poliomyelitis occurred in a visitor to the town.

With this short summary I close my report.

It gives me great pleasure to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the help that I have received from all those who have worked with me in matters concerning the public health.

I have invariably met with courtesy, help and consideration in all my dealings with my immediate colleagues.

August, 1958.

W. BAIN, M.B., B.S., Lond.,

Medical Officer of Health.

